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AUTHOR de Tagle, Jorge Perez
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ABSTRACT

Integrative learning is an application of the theory of multiple intelligence to teaching strategies and learning environments. Teachers in various parts of the country who have used integrative learning principles in their classrooms have noted dramatic gains in students' test scores and significant reductions in the amount of time required for learning. Integrative learning is reaching out to and succeeding with disadvantaged populations where traditional teaching has not succeeded, and has been seen as a means of drastically reducing the time needed for learning certain skills. The National Academy of Sciences has recommended accelerated learning as one of three approaches promising a breakthrough in learning development. The next step is to create a national program of accelerated literacy based on the principles of integrative learning. The cornerstone of the project should be efforts to reach out and succeed in teaching literacy in societies and cultures where traditional teaching has failed. Under the new program, everyone involved in the literacy movement from policymakers to trainers must be made to realize that there are at least four other types of intelligence besides those traditionally held in the Western view. These are the kinesthetic-body, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and musical forms of intelligence. Appropriate approaches for tapping these intelligences (including the use of animation and folklore) must be incorporated into the new literacy program. (MN)

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INTEGRATIVE LEARNING ASSOC.

130 Benedict Ave. Syracuse, NY 13210
(315) 428-0971

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PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL PROGRAM ON ACCELERATED LITERACY

Concurrent Session
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by:
Jorge Perez de Tagle
Integrative Learning Associates, Inc.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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SUMMARY

Literacy is a basic human right. The functional illiteracy of sixty percent of the world's population threathens the very core of our civilization.

This paper proposes a pilot program for the application of accelerated-integrative learning in literacy acquisition. Integrative Learning is a breakthrough that has the promise of being the preferred teaching system for the 21st century. The application of a joyful, muti-modal and multi-cultural approach to literacy acquisition holds promise of turning the tide over the growing worldwide illiteracy.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that: "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages".

Literacy is considered a human right but UNESCO in 1985 estimated that 885 million of the world population, aged fifteen and above are illiterate. Furthermore, sixty-five percent of the world population is considered functionally illiterate.

Functional illiteracy is defined as the incapacity of an individual to meet the writing and reading skills required for social, vocational, and civic participation in society. In the United States one out of three adults do not meet the minimum grade four level of functional literacy. Approximately sixty-five million USers are considered functionally illiterate. By 1990 it is estimated that a 12th grade reading level would be the minimum to meet the literacy requirements of industrial nations.

The world is at risk. The political leadership cannot afford the cost of illiteracy to national development. Conventional approaches to teaching literacy are not suceeding fast enough to turn the tide of illiteracy.

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PARADIGM SHIFT

The application for validation of Integrative Learning with the New York State Department of Education starts with the statement that:

"Educational policy, research and teacher education have been viewed within the paradigm of developmental and cognitive psychology and behaviorism with a narrow definition of intelligence (IQ), which has been defined and measured in terms of verbal and mathematical-logical performance.

"This view largely ignores the past twenty-five years of neurological research on the function, structure and operation of the brain. A paradigm shift is moving away from the narrow view of intelligence toward a new understnding of the learning process and intelligence which is expressed as the 'Theory of Multiple Intelligences' by Harvard's Howard Gardner in his book, FRAMES OF MIND.

"'Integrative Learning' is an application of the theory of Multiple Intelligences to teaching strategies and learning environments."

Integrative learning is a breakthrough that promises to be the preferred teaching system of the 21st century. Data in the past two decades have accumulated proof of its successful application in language teaching, improving student reading and mathematics scores, and the acceleration of learning in any subject material.

Students are accelerating their acquisition of a new language by three to five times in classes in the United States and Europe.

An elementary school in Chicago, Illinois recorded a 103% improvement of the reading scores of its 400 students after one years' application of integrative learning principles by its teachers.

The important fact is that integrative learning is reaching out and succeeding with disadvantaged populations where traditional teaching has not succeeded.

A grade one teacher, K. Wright from Wisconsin, USA has experienced: "All students showed improvement. The interesting fact was that some of my lowest achievers made the most significant gains". University professor C. Reinert, PhD. from Minnesota, USA sees "integrative learning techniques as a possible means to cut by 50% the time needed to learn skills for bachelor's and master's degree program in the sciences, ie., physics, chemistry, accounting and computer science".

In December of 1987, the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. released its findings of a two year study on learning strategies. Accelerated learning was one of three approaches that was recommended for showing evidence that suggested a breakthrough in learning development.

The next step is to see the application of the successes of integrative learning in a literacy pilot program.

LITERACY PILOT PROGRAM GOALS

1. Create the political concensus and commitment by educating the decision makers to the components of an integrative literacy program.

2. Develop a comprehensive model of an integrative literacy program that could serve as a blueprint for programs in divergent cultures.

3. Reach out and succeed in training literacy among societies or cultures where traditional teaching has failed.

4. Accelerate the literacy acquisition of the client population by a significant measure.

5. Achieve a significantly higher yield ratio of literacy levels achieved over the cost of training.

6. Show the actual dollar savings and projected savings of an Integrative Literacy program over conventional literacy approaches.

7. Train trainors and literacy program designers.

8. Provide the initial data base and research for subsequent literacy programs.

KEY COMPONENTS

The possibility of eradicating world illiteracy within the next two decades is within reach. The technology and resources are available.

Major portions of the components below are adapted from a paper of Integrative Learning Technologies, Inc., titled "A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH FOR RESOLVING THE COFFEE RUST CRISIS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA". These key components provide the basic principles of success for an integrative literacy program.

Concept Definition:

Traditional efforts for training often fail, because solutions which were tried elsewhere are imposed as solutions in a new environment on a new crisis. On the contrary, solving the problemm must recognize the cultural diversity of the particular population.

George Foster in his book on the impact of technological change on "traditional" cultures, said that "In studying examples of social and cultural change one encounters a series of factors which have contributed significantly to the introduction of new forms of behavior and which, although motivation is obviously involved, can better be illustrated under the heading above. These factors involve such things as cultural values, social forms, motor patterns, and economic reality."(1)

Moreover, for a new technology or innovation to be successful, it REQUIRES a "supporting social structure onto which it can be grated. This simply means that in all societies traditional institutions have recognized the roles: if new forms can be integrated or associated with these traditional roles, they have a better chance of being accepted than if there is nothing to tie to".(2)

According to Foster, "Culture" is the shorthand term for these rules that guide the way of life of the members of a social group. More specifically, culture can be thought of as the common, learned way of life shared by the members of a society, consisting of the totality of tools, techniques, social institutions, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and sysstems of value known to the group. Or, to put the distinction in a differeent way, society means people and culture means the behavior of people."(3)

Since this proposal deals with the behavior of people and behavior change, it is rooted in cultural change. In his work, Foster found, over and over again that "traditional" teaching and training approaches failed because of a lack of "fit" between the technological change and the culture itself. Criteria for absorption and assimilation are usually never established within the culture, but are imposed from outside "experts" who are often foreign.

It is in the above light that an economic/emotional context of literacy acquisition is the core of an integrative literacy program. The subject matter being read or written must be of direct and personal importance to the student. Because of this reason an externally imposed educational system that is divorced from the day to day values and occupation of the student cannot be effective. Integrative Learning is just the tool that is given meaning with culture specific content.

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(1) Foster, 1962, p. 162.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Foster, 1962, p. 11.

Multiple Intelligences:

To get the job done, we need to pay attention-- NOT to traditional ways of teaching-- but to innovative approaches to cultural change. A key principle that applies across cultures is the theory of multiple intelligences. Recent research from Harvard University suggests broader categories of intelligence than the traditional western view which is limited to: 1) linguistic, 2)spatial-visual, and 3)logical-mathematical approaches to formal teaching and intelligence quotient (IQ) testing.

According to the Harvard research, ethnic groups and pre-literate societies are usually strong in non-traditional education approaches using at least four other intelligences as listed below:

1) Kinesthetic-body intelligence is manifested in learning by doing with the body and movement. On-the-job skill modeling or apprenticeship with master craftsmen utilizes a lot of the kinesthetic intelligence. Drama, dance and modeling patterns are also examples of kinesthetic-body intelligence.

2) Interpersonal intelligence is best modeled by the village interpersonal system of norms and expectations. Villagers learn from each other's expectations and relations. Social success, acceptance and group leadership are good measures of this intelligence. Work, play, customs and rules, as well as attitudes toward "others" help to form this intelligence.

3) Intrapersonal intelligence is the capacity of the person to understand and integrate their emotions and feelings with the social reality. Cooperation and participation in groups facilitate this kind of intrapersonal ability.

4) Musical intelligence is very richly manifested in most village cultures. The use of kinesthetic-dance together with ethnic music is very effective in communicating complex and in-depth information. This is particularly well developed through dramatization and animation.

Unlike most unsuccessful Western technological approaches to education, training, and information transfer, integrative learning utilizes all seven intelligences in the transfer of procedures which is to be learned.

Specifically, this would mean the full utilization of the village/tribal language, music, folk lore, mythology, games, sports, humor, social hierarchy relations, and the indigenous psyche.

Employing the multiple intelligences of the people in acquiring literacy lends respect and assurance to the value of the village culture. Literacy and education are not divorced from the village life, but is developed as an integral part of it. The resulting sense of comfort, joy, and integration is the base from which an increased expectancy towards learning and an actual acceleration of learning is a normal result.

Folklore and Mythology:

All cultures are rich in imagery and mythology and is a largely unrecognized strength which can be actively tapped for success in literacy acquisition. A further example for the effectiveness of non-traditional, integrative learning techniques comes from A. R., MacKinnon, Director of the Center for International Programs at the University of Guelph, Canada:

"The emergence of integrative intelligences constitutes the base for the emergence of other intelligences, again as a part of a rediscovery process. In the Western mind, "myth" generally has a pejorative connotation. The term has ever been treated as synonymous with illusion. The function of myth and "mythic intelligence", however, is of crucial importance in shaping competencies and procedures for enhancing them. Recently, more attention has been paid for the significance of myth in Western society. In many other societies, mythic intelligences have always played a crucial role in determining what was to be learned and how.

"Myth in the non-pejorative sense is the essential building block of culture. Mythic intelligences in turn, grow directly from the given expresssion to a society's belief systems, history and aspirations. The main vehicles of mythic intelligences are indigenous languages where metaphor, synntax, grammar and all the dimensions of the of language function to serve many purposes, always with mythic intelligence, carrying the individual backwards and forward in time. Without the effective release of such intelligences, potential is continuously stultified. Education, accordingly, must be concerned with the release of such intelligences.

"Myth could well be the principal determinant in offsetting the negative ill effects of cultural interventions. The experience of the past twenty years has demonstrated not only that inteventions on a massive scale may be in many ways inescapable, but also that myhtic intelligences can be extensively released to offset long-term negative consequences."

Often within developing nations, the use of mythology and integrative learning is a predictably useful non-traditional approach in achieving traditional goals and objectives.

Animation:

In an economic development program in Nankorola, Mali, the purpose of which was to enhance hygiene and cleanliness, integrative learning was successfully adopted. The villagers felt that if the children were sick less often, they could be more productive. The villagers themselves believed that a way to greater comfort was through learning to read. A literacy program was developed by the concensus of the villagers, using animation and real, practical experiences in the learning process.

Animators were trained to visualize the activities of daily life which were discussed in the native language of Bambara. In their own, highly motivated, villiagers attended five nights each week after long days of toil in the fields. They talked of hygiene, stock breeding, agronomy, seed development and other practical knowledge.

After two years of reading through verbalization on practical community needs, many people learned to read, raising the literacy level drastically.

Despite the changes, the villagers have retained their language and culture, as well as prospered and achieved their self-stated goals.

Global Learning

One other major concept is to teach literacy in a global way. Literacy will not be taught in a linear, segmented fashion. For example literacy will be tied to issues relevant to the economic and social development of the community and how it relates with his or her family, health, finance, recreation, and arts.

In juxtaposition to "school like" methods, the global approach has the advantage of teaching functional literacy as a subsequent result to learning, for example, a vocational skill. Teaching, in this respect, is not seen as literacy instruction in the conventional way of memorizing the alphabet and its phonetic sounds and symbols.

Non-Authoritarian:

The experience of a rural teacher, Senora Rosa, in Pampahasi, Bolivia accurately describes the application of Integrative Learning.

"In many other schools, we observe a mechanical, monotonous and authoritarian teaching style. the result was to encourage submission, to devalue native culture in favor of modern, urban culture, and to provide teaching without really caring about encouraging children to develop. The school in Pampahasi did not fit this description.... Senora Rosa forged a type of link between the school and the street, the family, the city- indeed, with the rest of the universe. 'Discipline in school does not mean seating the children in rows or making them keep quiet or keeping them seated without letting them move.' says Senora Rosa. 'True discipline means that children take an active part in class activities, express their opinions and converse among themselves."

Similarly, in one Integrative Learning project in Chicago, Illinois, at the Guggenheim Elementary School, the principal recognized that analytical, regimented programs could not bring the 400 children to national norms in reading and math. Through the integration of the elements of multicultural teaching, the principle of multiple intelligences, global teaching and cooperative learning, the children were able to accelerate their learning. The learning process had a fundamental
effect of shifting the self-perception of the students. In many ways it is an empowering and liberating experience.

Political Will:

The key components discussed above provides a road map. The culture of the client population serves as the passenger. The political will of the implementing society is the vehicle that makes the whole trip possible.

The concensus and support by the leadership of the implementing organization is crucial. Commitment and prioritization of literacy has to be a given assumption. Tolerating any lip service will doom the program to failure before it even starts. The vision and courage of leadership is the first and the last component to realizing the possibility of a fully literate society.